

1967

THE OSKAR DIETHELM HISTORICAL LIBRARY

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FRIENDS OF THE OSKAR DIETHELM HISTORICAL LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

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When Dr. Oskar Diethelm was appointed Professor of Psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College in 1936, he brought with him the conviction that awareness of the historical development of psychiatric thought is an important constituent of one's understanding of the discipline today. Soon after his arrival he began to collect significant works in the history of psychiatry in order to supply the necessary "equipment" for research in psychiatric history. This collection gradually grew to such proportions that a separate historical library was created in 1953, and on his retirement in 1962 it was named the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library in his honor. Careful consideration of the usefulness for actual historical investigations has always been a major criterion for deciding on acquisitions for the library, and since 1958 it has been the research facility for the section on the history of psychiatry and the behavioral sciences of the department of psychiatry.

In order to assist in supporting the library's growth, the Friends of the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library were organized in 1964. We are pleased to report that the membership in 1967 was 82, reflecting a small but loyal group of Friends who have enabled the library to add significantly to the excellence of its collection.

The library consists of a reference section and a collection of original psychiatric and related works that were published before 1920. There were 225 volumes added through the generosity of the Friends, another 25 monographs, theses and annual reports added through special contributions of books or funds, and 11 works purchased through Dr. Diethelm's special fund. The reference collection that supports the historical library has been substantially increased by the addition of 217 volumes purchased through research funds allocated for that purpose.

Until last year the historical library was unable to devote attention to a manuscript collection, its only acquisitions being single gift items or an occa-

sional purchase. Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt a special fund for the purchase of manuscript items was established late in 1966, and the library is most pleased to report that an impressive beginning has already been made. We were able to obtain 27 items, as well as the collection regarding Miss Frances X that is discussed later. Some important figures in the history of psychiatry and the behavioral sciences are now represented in our manuscript collection.

An 1829 letter is by Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832). He modified the ideas of his teacher, Franz Joseph Gall, and gave the name of phrenology to their theory that the brain is the organ of the mind and that each mental faculty it contains is a separate entity, according in size with the development of the faculty itself. Although the doctrine enjoyed only brief popularity in medicine, its impact on psychiatry has been great, giving impetus to researches that contributed to the development of the field of neurophysiology. Spurzheim helped popularize phrenology by writing extensively on the subject and by travelling to England to lecture and then to America, where he died in Boston at the peak of his fame and influence.

A second manuscript addition is an undated letter from Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876), who also was very interested in the phrenological movement and corresponded with Andrew Combe, Spurzheim's successor. Howe was outstanding in the field of social welfare and reform, never really content without a cause to fight for and a movement to lead. This pattern was demonstrated early when he fought against the Turks in the hills of Greece as a young man; his interest for us lies however in his achievements in America, where he astounded educators by establishing a school to teach deaf and dumb children and founded the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Youth. These institutions, and those they inspired, were for the purpose of educating and training people hitherto believed incapable of learning. Howe also demanded

the improvement of prisons and asylums so that physical and moral retardation would not be exacerbated. He believed mental illness to be in part a social disorder, not necessarily inherent or caused by natural processes, and his work in social welfare was to the end of correcting this.

Another manuscript letter acquired this year was written in 1801 by Alexander Hunter (1729-1809), who worked for five years toward the founding of the York Lunatic Asylum. It was established in 1777, and he was for many years the well-known physician there. After Hunter's death great abuses at the York Lunatic Asylum were exposed, and Hunter was implicated for his neglect of the inmates and the appalling conditions under which they lived. It was the death there in 1792 of a young Quaker girl that led William Tuke to found the York Retreat which became the model for many early American psychiatric hospitals.

The historical library was able to purchase an unusual and interesting collection of letters discussing the mental illness of a young woman and showing the development and range of her illness over a period of 14 years. At 15 Frances was dismissed from a girl's school as unfit to continue, a situation that she blamed on the death of her father that left her an orphan. Over one hundred letters between 1885 and 1893 written by her brother, her aunt, the doctor who housed and cared for her and occasionally by Frances herself, as well as medical reports and commitment papers, tell of the hopes that all entertained for her recovery. There are graphic descriptions of relapses that necessitated confinement and restraint, or times when she would write lucid but extravagant letters to the Queen of England or to philanthropists asking for donations to found a hospital in Madras. There is a reference to a Dr. Maudesley [sic] as having seen Frances at the onset of her illness, probably referring to Dr. Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), the son-in-law of John Conolly and the well-known founder of the Maudsley Hospital in London. These manuscript letters take Frances up to age 29, at which time it appears that there is a

slight possibility that she will be paroled if her behavior continues to be exemplary. The letters provide a very personal and moving chronicle of the pathology of a mentally ill person, and are a valuable addition to our research library.

In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Blatt's donation, Dr. and Mrs. Eric T. Carlson last year gave 66 manuscript items from their collection to augment the holdings of the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library.

Brief mention of some of the works purchased through funds donated by the Friends in 1967 will give an indication of the range in chronology and subject matter of additions to the library.

Reynolds, Edward, A TREATISE ON THE PASSIONS AND FACULTIES OF THE SOULE OF MAN, London: Robert Bostock, 1650.

Edward Reynolds (1599-1676) was a prominent minister in England, holding the offices of the King's Chaplain, Bishop of Norwich, and Warden of Merton College, Oxford. His Treatise elegantly describes the effect of the emotions on man's physical and mental functions. The subject was a popular one in the 17th century. While medical writers ascribed disorders of the "soule of man" to ragings of the animal spirits or a disruption of the humoral balance, Reynolds, as a theologian, is more philosophical in trying to define the role of emotion as it is manifest in human behavior. It is in his subtle "psychology" and his remarkably astute discussion of personality that he is most interesting. The Fall of Adam weakened the control of reason over the emotions, admitting the possibility thereafter of their becoming "unruly," causing weakness in the faculties of the mind and the spirits in the body. In most cases, however, the passions can be regulated by "opposing contrary Passion to contrary," or by "scattering and distracting" them either with other passions or through the power of reason, thereby interrupting the force of the emotion. The faculties of the mind and particularly the rational powers must be developed to lead man to knowledge, the

supreme mortal good, and to regulate the passions so that the three areas of mind, body and soul are harmonious and healthy.

Withers, Thomas, OBSERVATIONS ON CHRONIC WEAKNESS, York: A. Ward, 1777.

This work reminds one of the writings on neurasthenia written a century later. In the same year that he published his Observations, Thomas Withers (1750-1809), M.D., helped found the York Lunatic Asylum, mentioned above, and later the York Dispensary. Chronic weakness he finds to be a state of the body that can bring on both physical and mental illnesses, and he warns against treating it as hypochondriasis or as an hysterical complaint. Scholars should avoid strenuous intellectual endeavors such as the study of mathematics or philosophy, and concentrate on history or literature instead. The treating doctor must be careful to keep up the spirits of the patient, to occupy his dejected mind with amusements and work. It is also his duty to attend to both mind and body, to "penetrate at once into the mind, and to ascertain with a cautious exactness the ruling passion." As a reformer Withers urged superintendents to concern themselves with the physical care and surroundings of the mentally ill in asylums as well as with therapy, maintaining that the disorders of the mind and the body were so intimately connected that successful treatment must include attention to both.

Dix, Dorothea L., MEMORIAL SOLICITING ENLARGED AND IMPROVED ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE INSANE OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW HOSPITAL, Nashville: M'Kennie, 1847.

In November 1847, Dorothea Dix (1802-1887) presented a memorial to the Tennessee legislature, only three years after her first memorial moved the Massachusetts legislature to action with its emotional and extensively documented appeal for improved housing and care of the indigent and mentally ill. The Tennessee legislature was sufficiently impressed by the force of her arguments to

approve, three months later, the purchase of land and the appropriation of a large sum of money for the construction of a new asylum. This pattern of response was the rule, not the exception. More than 20 states, as a direct result of Dorothea Dix's appeals, constructed or made extensive improvements upon asylums. Each memorial was preceded by months of groundwork--she visited prisons, talked to superintendents, enlisted the support of key legislators and the press. Her campaign lasted for 40 years and took her through the United States and to England and Europe. She relied on the support and advice of such friends as William Ellery Channing, Samuel Gridley Howe, Samuel Woodward and John S. Butler. Largely through her efforts the general public was made more aware of the tremendous and complex problems surrounding the care of the mentally ill, and the need for constant attention to and improvement of their situation.

Grimes, Green, A SECRET WORTH KNOWING. A TREATISE ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT IN THE WORLD: SIMPLY TO SAY, INSANITY, Nashville: [N. P.], 1845.

Two years before Miss Dix's Tennessee memorial Grimes, an inmate of the Lunatic Asylum of Tennessee, had attempted to draw attention to the plight of the mentally ill. His claim that his book was "The only work of the kind in the United States, or, perhaps, in the known world, founded on general observations and truth," is not quite accurate. One of the earliest American tracts by a patient was written by Robert Fuller in 1833. Such an effort as Grimes' was fairly unusual, however, and its tone of authority was impressive. His Treatise is filled with quotations from and references to such men as Crichton, Pinel, Ray and Prichard, and the story of his mental decline is both tragic and pathetic, despite his querulous attacks on all relatives and acquaintances. Grimes possibly alerted some of the more conscientious citizens, particularly of his home state, to the understaffing of the hospitals, the absence of recreational grounds and educational materials, the

lack of a system of therapeutics.

Jung, Carl Gustave, WANDLUNGEN UND SYMBOLE DER LIBIDO, Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1912.

Jung (1875-1961) published the first part of this work in 1911, his first major one in which important differences with Freudian theory are indicated. His friendship and alliance with Freud had begun in the early years of the psychoanalytic movement. Jung had studied under Bleuler at the Burghölzli and had achieved prominence among the Zürich group of psychiatrists. Because of his position of importance and his interest in the works of Freud, he was one of a small group of men responsible for introducing Freud's ideas outside Vienna. In 1910 Jung was elected president of the newly formed International Psychoanalytic Association, and became editor of the Jahrbuch, the first periodical devoted to psychoanalysis. As his theories developed, his rejection of some of Freud's theories, in particular that of the libido as a strictly sexual phenomenon, became more emphatic. Personal conflicts accompanied doctrinal disagreements, and Jung began to withdraw from the organized psychoanalytic movement. After a year of intensive research on classical myths and fantasies and the relationship of psychoanalytic principles to them, a subject which had long fascinated him, he published Wandlungen I in the Jahrbuch. It examined the idea of the archetype, pointing toward his later theory of the collective unconscious, and studied in depth the similarities of some cultural and psychical phenomena through time. Freud received it well, but the second part, published the following year, took strong issue with his theory of the libido and suggested that Freud had failed to differentiate fully between its relations to neurosis and to psychosis. With Jung's resignation as editor of the Jahrbuch in September 1913 and as president of the Association seven months later, the two men's interests diverged even more. While Jung's ideas are of great and continuing interest to theoreticians in particular, his importance to psychiatry and especial-

ly to the psychoanalytic movement was primarily reflected in his contact with Freud and his earlier contributions. These included his setting up of word-association patterns and experiments, his defining a complex as the combination of a repressed idea and its affect, and the effect of his challenges in forcing Freud to make his own theories more precise and internally consistent.

Eleven works were purchased through contributions of the Anonymous Donors in support of Dr. Diethelm. This fund supports the collection of earlier works, especially medical theses and textbooks of psychiatric interest published before 1750. Illustrative of this is the Observationum medicarum rariurum of Johann Schenck von Grafenberg (1530-1598), originally published in Frankfurt in 1602. The historical library has obtained the 1665 edition, also published in Frankfurt. Schenck was the city physician of Freiberg, and wrote extensively on subjects ranging from chorea lasciva and St. Vitus' Dance to ulcers of the stomach. His compilation of pathologic notes was outstanding at that time for its thoroughness; he relied on Vesalius and other authorities to classify disease entities as well as including his own experiences and ideas. Zilboorg credits Schenck as one of a few medical men of the sixteenth century who refused to ascribe mental disease at least in part to the Devil.

Mrs. B. Albert Stern has given to the department of psychiatry a portrait of Clifford W. Beers, the founder of the mental hygiene movement in the United States, as well as some personal letters and an autographed copy of his book, A mind that found itself. The portrait, done by her father, Henry Rittenberg, hangs in the reference room of the Oskar Diethelm Historical Library, a fitting complement to a roll-top desk once belonging to Beers and some other material deposited here on loan from the World Federation for Mental Health. It may be of interest to note that the portrait of Dr. William Russell that hangs in the

main corridor was also painted by Mr. Rittenberg.

During the past year a number of individuals have helped the growth of the library by presenting books, journals, photographs, etc. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the following:

Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Blatt
Dr. and Mrs. Eric T. Carlson
Mr. Edward Fisher
Miss Emily L. Martin
Dr. Roy W. Menninger
Dr. W. Walter Menninger
Dr. Marie-Louise Schoelly
Dr. Donald J. Simons
Dr. Hans Syz

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